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Agricultural Workforce Policy Board

Annual Report 2000

May 2000

Introduction

The AWPB hosts an annual planning workshop as an opportunity to: communicate; enhance the awareness of the human resource side of our business; develop innovative approaches and directions on the impacts of labour policy; leadership issues; youth job and career issues; and, identification of emerging issues. The workshop results form the basis of an annual report and ultimately directions for the year to develop a common approach and priorities.

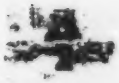
The intent of the workshop is to share opinions and ideas, in an attempt to avoid duplication, use resources wisely, foster greater interagency and commodity communication and gain insight on the mandates of other agencies or organizations, while developing partnerships and priorities on the key areas of focus. The AWPB workshop provides an opportunity for producers, from a variety of regions, backgrounds and commodities, to work with each other and government partners.

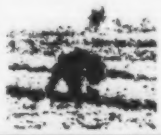
The following represents the key issues outlined during the annual planning workshop by 44 participants, comprised of youth, industry organizations, industry participants, government agencies and worker representatives. The participants were asked to define the issues but to think also about a series of actions. The three topic areas were:

1. **Awareness of Safety and Training**
This session looked at the WCB classification increases. Expected outcomes: Clear recommendations that can be presented as options to BCAC.

2. **What are the emerging issues?**
Expected Outcome: Clearly articulate emerging issues to focus on and build recommendations and opportunities to address.

3. **Building a Vision for Human Resources in Agriculture**
Expected Outcome: In a "perfect world" what would BC agriculture look like (not just identify issues). Clear resources, actions and structures in place.





Part I Awareness of Safety and Training

In the summer of 1999 the agricultural industry became concerned about changes to the Workers Compensation Board classification system, to be implemented in 2000. Under the new classification system some sectors would see employer contribution rates increasing from 2.8% to 7.47% over the next 3 years. While the implications of an accident on any farm would see rates rise by up to 33%.

To develop an awareness of safety and the implications of increased rates the AWPB sought to develop dialogue to mitigate the WCB classification rate increase and develop opportunities. This by no means is an overnight process.

Priority Areas:

1. Enhance education

Themes:

To lower WCB claims and accidents greater training and education is required. It is the role of the employer or trainer to communicate and provide a greater length of time for on-farm training, in this FARSHA can play a key role. The employee must also take responsibility for his or her own training. The highest incident of accidents in the cattle industry is youth and or to employees on the job less than 1 year.

- There are enormous implications for all sectors that may have lower classifications when accidents occur. Classification rates can increase by up to 100% in 33% jumps over three years. Due diligence with respect to training and education and understanding the process is required.

Action Matrix:

Theme: Safety and Education	Partners	Action
Due diligence with respect to on-farm training and education.	employer FARSHA AWPB BCAC	– leadership – training and education – communication, case studies – communication
Education curriculum must include mandatory health and safety training.	University & colleges BCAC FARSHA AWPB	– Education curriculum – leadership, lobby – training and education – through advisory process and communication

Start communication and collaboration early (target youth) - e.g. 4-H programs, agriculture in the classroom, include in summer employment information, expand on health and safety issues	4H AITC BCAC FARSHA AWPB MAFF	– 4H programs – ag in the class events and curriculum – advocacy, leadership – training and education – communication, facilitation – communication, facilitation
Draw all sectors into the program of education, training and due diligence (explain why it pays). Provide improved education to producers about the new classifications and regulation, what it means to report an accident, explain the increase in rates. FARSHA can play an excellent partnering role with industry.	BCAC FARSHA AWPB	– leadership – education and training – communication, facilitation

2. Communications strategy

Themes:

Agriculture does not communicate well; producers are often "afraid" of not understanding the issues and do not speak up or ask questions. Producers who may look on FARSHA as a regulatory body often misunderstand the role of FARSHA.

- Little or no training is currently provided to safeguard against accidents on the job. This relates to human resource management practices on-farm.
- There appears to be a lack of understanding of WCB on the farm. It appears that commodity managers may understand but the information may not filter to the farm where accidents happen. Search out best methods of communication and the development of structures or projects to put in place.

Action Matrix:

Theme: Communications/Structure	**Role**	**Action**
Develop an impact analysis to tie to safety training results, to lowering of classifications	BCAC FARSHA AWPB	– leadership – communication, facilitation – communication
Direct communications to commodities in a simple format on WCB, education and training	BCAC FARSHA WCB AWPB	– leadership – communication – information, dialogue – communication

Theme: Communications/Structure	Role	Action
Identify ingredients to lower rates. BCAC working with AWPB (roles defined) and FARSHA will seek to develop dialogue with WCB: 1) possibly set agriculture apart from industrial sectors or models that the WCB classification system is based upon; 2) WCB develop tools and profiles on the job to better understand agriculture; 3) BCAC help to increase industry participation on FARSHA safety, training and education through work on member attitude and culture changes on health and safety issues.	Employers BCAC FARSHA WCB AWPB MAFF	– participation in training and education – leadership, development of team approach – training and education, communication and consultation – farm profiles, regulatory review, pilot programs for agriculture – communication, facilitation – interagency consultation

3. Utilize resources through WCB and FARSHA

Themes:

Industry participants expressed concern about where to go to find the help that is required to understand the system and classifications, how to apply for programs that may help to lower rates and how to apply for funds to make this process work for agriculture. In turn WCB must learn about agriculture to better implement a "reality check" for a classification system that works with agriculture. Further it was determined that FARSHA is not well known or utilized by industry.

Action Matrix:

Theme: Safer Workplace Utilize Resources	Role	Action
Develop incentives for safe employees (share in the savings)	Employers	– leadership, communication
Develop a tier approach to safety and awareness the ultimate reward is financial incentive	BCAC FARSHA	– leadership and awards – advocacy, training and education
Encouraging a better understanding and the development of "farm profiles" through WCB.	BCAC WCB FARSHA	– leadership – information and accessibility – partner
Access the available funding for agriculture to develop a proposal that provides a framework for the actuarial data required to reflect classifications within sectors	BCAC FARSHA	– leadership for commodity – partner and facilitation
Development of safety training that reflects the sectors.	FARSHA workers AWPB MAFF BCAC	– development, delivery, communication – take training – communication – communication – direction, leadership

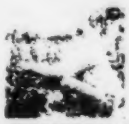
4. Celebrate and Reward producers who make Safety an Issue

Themes:

Enhance communication about what is working and why through case studies.

Action Matrix:

Theme: Rewards	Role	Action
Develop safety awards, reward producers, raise the profile of due diligence.	BCAC FARSHA WCB AWPB	– leadership – selection and awards – awards – communication
Develop short stories of farms and ranches that have training and approaches in place. Broader sector communication on all the above	FARSHA AWPB	– leadership – communication, facilitation
Impact analysis to tie safety training results to lowering classifications	BCAC FARSHA AWPB	– leadership – communication and facilitation – communication
Develop safety awards, reward producers and raise the profile of due diligence	BCAC FARSHA WCB workers AWPB	– leadership – selection and awards – awards, recognition, lower classification – rewards and recognition – communication



Part II Emerging Issues

To better understand the emerging issues and how the they relate to the workforce each group was asked to look at how agriculture develops iong term planning for labour requirements. For example:

- How does agriculture continue to attract a new generation to agriculture
- Are programs needed to improve worker information and the capacity to apply for jobs?
- Who will be on the farm in ten years time?
- Human resource management skills and the changing structure of farms.

The priority areas are arranged into themes that emerged, these are as follows:

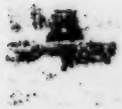
1. Viability of Agriculture/Marketing

Themes:

It was suggested that each sector must be required to complete an economic assessment that reflects true costs of production, the outcome may be a flow of what agriculture can do better.

The emphasis for agriculture has been on globalization; the feeling of lack of control of markets and products often has the ability to paralyze industry. Access to information that looks at production and management approaches that focuses on quality and the ability to change rapidly is not easily available. Commodity prices continue to fall, returns get lower. Yet some sectors continue to place a low importance on the value of marketing strategies or development of actions for increased profit. The following comments were picked up in all three groups:

> Federal government programs are out of touch with industry. We need to diversify and develop markets. The status quo is not working.
> Participants expressed concern about the absence of "leaders" in agriculture when comparing opinions and developing ideas, i.e. Investment Agriculture, BCAC, MAFF, are we only speaking to ourselves?
> How do we market the product, the 'life style', value on the life style, and provide a focus on the positive side of this industry.
> Agriculture organizations remain out of touch with agriculture at large -- lack of stable funding continues to create a climate of competition for issues and funds, rather than getting the job done.



Action Matrix:

Theme: Skill Development	Role	Action
Food security - we have to 'hedge our bets' - diversify and experiment and develop the skills to meet and make change.	BCAC MAFF AWPB Invest Ag	– leadership, advocacy – farm business management, information – partner, facilitation and communication – support, leadership
Develop more programs to address, leadership, human resource management, farm business management and the skills required to meet changes, including changes in attitudes - workers are a resource.	BCAC MAFF AWPB Invest Ag	– advocacy, leadership – support – development, communication and facilitation – support
Develop marketing approaches in BC, and the broad range of skills needed to be viable in the future.	BCAC MAFF AWPB MAETT	– leadership and visions – farm management – leadership and facilitation – support (formal and informal)
We must have stable agriculture organizations, not competing for issues and funds.	BCAC MAFF	– leadership – legislation, policy framework

Theme: Marketing	Role	Action
Work with Buy BC to develop industry input.	BCAC MAFF	– communication to all ag organizations, advocacy – partner with industry to develop long term approaches
Develop communications approaches to Investment Agriculture, BCAC to better understand that one size does not fit all and there are many issues we must deal with.	Invest Ag BCAC MAFF AWPB	– greater communication and participation – leadership and vision – advocacy – communication and facilitation
Value the intangibles and showcase the success stories. Develop international forum showcasing B.C. Agriculture (sharing practices, ideas, and market development). Use this as an opportunity to learn.	MAFF BCAC AWPB	– farm management – buy-in and support, ag awareness – communication

2. Awareness of Agriculture

Themes:

Attracting a new generation to agriculture depends on our image, which encompasses wage scales, human resource management skills, the ability to advance on the job and access to information. Improving worker information (no structure) and the capacity to maintain a BC Agricultural Labour Pool is threatened (receives no funding), developing strong advocacy roles to maintain services is critical to sustainability.

Action Matrix:

Theme: career awareness, resources	Role	Action
Work with BCAC Agriculture Awareness in the development of events, presentations on the career or workforce side.	AWPB BCAC AITC Univ./College MAFF	– leadership, development and facilitation – ag awareness, partnership – linkages and improved partnership – education, input and direction – 4H
Develop a proposal to build on the Food for Thought CD to a higher level of expertise	AWPB Univ./College AITC BCAC MAFF MAETT	– leadership, development and facilitation – direction, partnership – partnership and advice – direction, ag awareness, support – interagency consultation – interagency consultation
Value the intangibles. Develop a higher profile for AWPB. Celebrate good news stories.	AWPB BCAC MAFF	– communication and facilitation – leadership and support – support
Change image of farming, agriculture is a sustainable business. Develop a scale of where the profit goes to reflect 'true' costs of production, include promotion, marketing, production, labour.	BCAC MAFF Invest Ag AWPB	– ag awareness, data – communication, support and statistical – funding and support – communication

3. Human Resources

Themes:

Agriculture needs to sell itself as a career and all that it encompasses and the natural process of "professional development" programs such as leadership programs, human resource management and skill development opportunities.

Excellent careers and good paying jobs - there are 'bright spots' - to encourage people, although the AWPB can not do this alone. Farm succession, access to capital and skill development are key areas, that are largely being left behind. Shortages of good management skills show up in most sectors. Further there are still many employers who lack the skills to make changes. If issues are identified as priorities how does funding follow, i.e. leadership, human resource management rural development opportunities, etc.

Action Matrix:

Theme: HR awareness/new entrants	Role	Action
Development of more partners to support human resource development.	AWPB BCAC MAFF AITC Univ./College AAFC Invest Ag	– leadership, development and facilitation – vision and support – advocacy – education, support – curriculum – support – support

Promote succession, and develop case studies and models that are working, including improved access to information	MAFF BCAC CFBMC AWPB	– farm management – leadership and advocacy – support, linkages – communication and linkages
Develop new entrant programs offering opportunities for young people	BCAC AWPB 4H youth org.	– leadership, vision and advocacy – development, communication – development, ideas, communication – development, ideas, communication

4. Benchmarking

Themes

In order to measure how far we have come or how far agriculture has to go, there is a need to develop benchmarks with other jurisdictions. The economic viability of farming field crop vegetables, berries and some hard and soft fruits must be part of the benchmarking. Comparisons in direct costs with other jurisdictions in addition to a broad look at innovative methods to secure labour supply will be examined. Viability including competitive pricing vs. minimum wage and other regulatory requirements may also be part of the scope. Benchmarking could include how the peak seasonal demand is approached, in other provinces and countries.

Action Matrix:

Theme: data collection	**Role**	**Action**
The Board will look at the development of benchmarks with other jurisdictions and investigate further broad-based approaches to workforce issues, by highlighting farms that are doing things differently, using innovation, technology to help others through specialization and niche marketing, through applied technology, biometrics, innovation in crop harvesting.	AWPB BCAC MAFF AAFC Invest Ag	– development and facilitation leadership – information – support – support – support
Development of data to identify labour shortages, both skilled and unskilled labour during peak and annual periods	BCAC MAFF	– leadership – support, linkages and interagency consultation

Part III Building a Vision for Human Resources in Agriculture

Working to build a vision for human resources, the participants determined the following points that need to happen towards the development of a vision for human resource issues in agriculture.

Theme: Employer Vision	Role	Action
A strong and vital industry that has access to both skilled workers and seasonal workers. Career counseling professional's with linkages back to the AWPB to counsel others on the merits of agriculture employment and careers.	AWPB BCAC MAFF AAFC Invest Ag	– development and facilitation leadership – information, support – support – support
A provincial leadership program that responds to industry burnout, providing the skills to bring new leaders forward, placing agriculture in a strong position globally and locally.	AWPB BCAC MAFF Invest Ag	– communication, facilitation – leadership – support, linkages and interagency consultation – support
Strong partnerships in agriculture that approach the diversity of issues with commitment and vision.	BCAC	– leadership
A training culture that acknowledges and supports ongoing training and sees the benefits. This includes graduated training to management levels (includes HR management marketing perspectives and practices sustainability), school programs (CAPP programs in agriculture and agri-ecology).	AWPB MAETT MAFF BCAC	– communication, facilitation – partnerships, support – interagency consultation – support
Employers with well developed job descriptions with clear ladders for career options and remuneration. Practical work experience that includes, apprenticeship, internship, based on the European models. Employers having realistic expectations of worker performance with strong communication skills, in return employees have realistic expectations and dedication to keep abreast of change.	AWPB MAETT BCAC	– communication, facilitation – support, development, partnerships – support, leadership
An agricultural labour exchange to help meet the peak season harvest demands throughout the province.	AWPB MAFF LABOUR	– coordination, communication – support, interagency consultation – develop new approaches

Annual meetings between education and industry in the form of an "Agriculture Education Forum" (reality check).	AWPB BCAC MAETT	– participation – participation, support – commitment, communication
Strong industry connection to FARSHA to communicate health and safety information in various languages in addition to ongoing multi year funding for FARSHA.	BCAC AWPB	– support, leadership – communication
Ongoing multi-year funding for the AWPB to continue to expand on awareness and communication of skill and labour supply issues. The BC Agricultural Labour Pool would operate with secure and stable funding with the AWPB helping to develop approaches for job opportunities and awareness.	HRDC MAETT LABOUR AAFC MAFF BCAC	– support – support – support – support – support – support
100 % involvement in associations by producers representing a vibrant agriculture community that has the ability to respond to change.	BCAC	– leadership
Multi-year funding for Agriculture in the Classroom working with the younger audience and stronger connections with AWPB and FARSHA.	HRDC MAETT AAFC MAFF BCAC	– support – support – support – support – support

Theme: Worker Vision	**Role**	**Action**
Employers with a commitment to making employees feel valued with strong incentives for safe farms, in addition to well-developed industry peer review standards for safety, upgrading and certification.	AWPB BCAC MAFF Invest Ag Workforce	– development and facilitation leadership – information – support – support – communication
Strong partnerships in agriculture that approach the diversity of issues with commitment and vision.	BCAC MAFF	– leadership – support, linkages and interagency consultation
Scholarships for students pursuing a wide range of horticulture and agriculture studies.	AWPB BCAC	– building partnerships – leadership and support

Theme: Government Vision	**Role**	**Action**
A public sector that recognizes that long term approaches are necessary to build strong partnerships to address the workforce issues in a timely, up to date, useful fashion with commitments and resources.	AWPB MAFF AAFC Invest Ag LABOUR HRDC	– communication and facilitation – support – support – support – support – support